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praise of which many poems have been written by Brothers of the Order. The Grand Sanusi forbad music, dancing, and singing in the recitations of the Order, but in this he was at one with all the official spokesmen of Islam. Most reformist movements in Islam tend towards asceticism.

Far from being extreme ascetics, however, the Sanusi Brothers eat and dress well, even using scent, and are amiable and merry companions. The Tunisian scholar and traveller Muhammad 'Uthman al-Hashaishi, who travelled in 1896 via Malta, Tripoli, and Banghazi to Kufra to visit al-Sayyid al-Mahdi and met the leading Brothers of the time, remarks that 'they are fond of diversions, honest jesting. I have visited many of their zawiyas and I have made the acquaintance of many of their notables: I have seen only cheerful and smiling faces, welcoming me with benevolence and kindness. May God reward them!'[1]

The Grand Sanusi discouraged the trappings of poverty by his example, his exhortations, and his insistence on the Brothers being self-supporting. Although the Heads of the Sanusiya Order, like the Wahhabi leaders, encouraged settlement on the land, they can hardly have hoped to have greatly influenced the Bedouin to this end; but they insisted on the lodges of the Order supporting themselves by agriculture supplemented by stock-raising, and thereby took a stand against *ittikal*, the dependence for livelihood on alms and not on labour which some mendicant Orders have advocated.

The Order has always been, in fact, conventional as well as orthodox. In its early period it was essentially a missionary Order with the limited aim of bringing by peaceful persuasion the Bedouin Arabs and the peoples of the Sahara and the Sudan to a fuller understanding of the beliefs and morals of Islam, while giving them at the same time the blessings of civilization: justice, peace, trade, and education. Its principles were, as Shaikh Muhammad 'Uthman says, simply 'to do good and avoid evil'.[2]

The accusation of fanaticism is not borne out by either the character of the Bedouin adherents of the Order or by its actions.

[1] Mohammed ben Otsmane el-Hachaichi, *Voyage au Pays des Senoussia à travers La Tripolitaine et les Pays Touareg*, 1912, p. 128 (1st ed., 1903).
[2] Ibid., p. 86.

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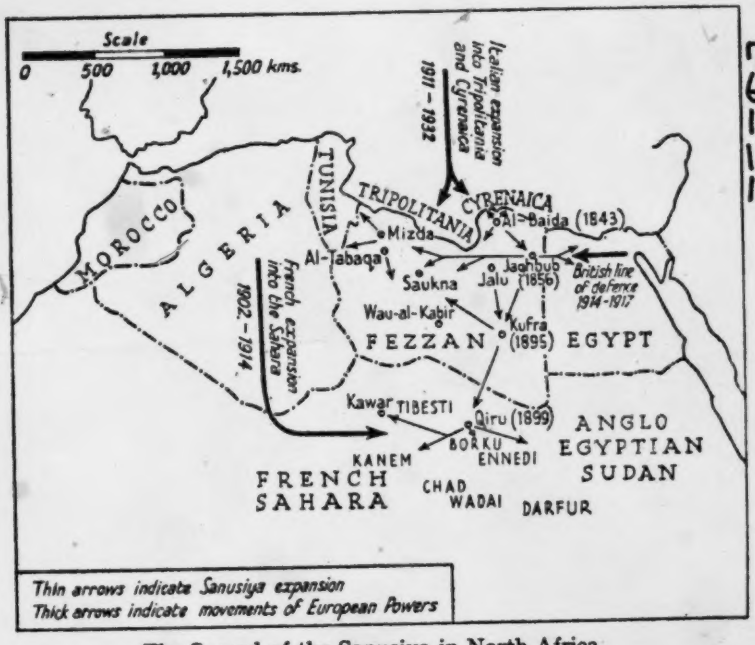
touch with the lodges of his Order in Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, the Western Desert of Egypt, and the Sudan.

In moving the seat of his Order to Jaghbub, the Grand Sanusi was probably most influenced by his decision to direct his missionary propaganda southwards. It is understandable that he should have made this decision. His was a missionary



The Spread of the Sanusiya in North Africa.

mind and the Order he had founded a missionary Order, and the pagan and semi-pagan countries of the Sahara and the Sudan, and of Equatorial Africa beyond them, offered endless scope for conversion to the faith. Moreover, his Order was already reaching the limits of its expansion in North Africa. It had won over the nomad and semi-nomad Bedouin tribes of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and Egypt, and the oases folk under their influence, but was not making, and was not even in its heyday to make, much impression on the peasants and townsmen up against whom it now found itself in Northern Tripolitania and the Nile Valley. Dammed to west and east the Order

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poured its vitality southwards along the trade routes to the interior of Africa, into Fazzan and the various regions that are to-day called the French Sahara and French Equatorial Africa. Until France opened up the Atlantic seaboard, much of the Central African trade found its way along the oases-routes to the ports of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania and there were, therefore, well-established social connexions running from the Bedouin tribes of Cyrenaica and southern Tripolitania through the oases-dwellers to the tribes of the interior, for the nomads of Libya controlled the routes and to a large extent supplied the transport for the caravans. These connexions allowed an easy ingress to the Sanusiya. The two Cyrenaican tribes who chiefly traded with the Sahara, the Majabra and the Zuwaya of the oases of Jalu and al-Jikharra, had already been won over to the Order. The Zuwaya, who had date groves in the distant oasis archipelago of Kufra, over 700 km. to the south of Jaghbub, had already promised the Grand Sanusi a liberal donation of palms and water if he would build a zawiya there, and he had sent one of his followers to supervise the erection at al-Jauf of a lodge which became known as Zawiyat al-Ustad. Also, the Order had gained a foothold in the Wadai. While still a student at Mecca the Grand Sanusi had made friends with Muhammad Sharif, a prince of the Wadai, who in 1838 became Sultan of that country and furthered the interests of the Order there. It is said also that the Grand Sanusi bought a caravan of slaves on its way from the Wadai through Jaghbub to the coast and, having freed and educated them, sent them back to the Wadai as his missionaries.[1] The Order was also infiltrating from Mizda in southern Tripolitania, where a lodge was founded in 1845, and from the lodges in the oases of the Sirtican hinterland into Fazzan.

In Jaghbub oasis the Grand Sanusi set about the construction of his headquarters, a large mass of stone buildings, some of them two-storied, enclosing a mosque and school which were, for Cyrenaica, on an imposing scale. Around these central buildings and courts were the houses of the *Ikhwan*, many of them teachers in the school, of the students, of whom Shaikh Muhammad 'Uthman says that there were over 300,[2] and of the Sayyid's family. There were also guest-rooms, quarters for the

[1] Duveyrier, op. cit., pp. 18–19.

[2] Op. cit., p. 88.

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from Algeria and the other countries of the Maghrib on his travels backwards and forwards to Arabia. He found in Cyrenaica a tribal structure of a simple kind on which it was possible to build a missionary organization, but not out of which it could be built. He brought this organization with him to Cyrenaica, a band of devoted followers whose allegiance had been tried by many vicissitudes. It must be remembered also that these intimates of the Grand Sanusi were foreigners to the Bedouin of Cyrenaica, with whom they had no ties of kinship, so that they stood always outside the tribal system and were not involved in the ancient loyalties and feuds inherent in Bedouin society. The missionary organization, the Sanusiya Order, was separate from the tribal system, and by centring it in the distant oasis of Jaghbub the Grand Sanusi prevented it from becoming identified with any one tribe or section of the country, as it might have become had it been centred in Cyrenaica proper. As we will see, it was the local attachment of the tribes to the zawiyas in their territories, and the attachment of the Shaikhs of these zawiyas to the Head of the Order, which made the Order so effective a missionary Body, and eventually enabled it to become a political force.

The Grand Sanusi died at Jaghbub on 7 September 1859 and was buried there. Later a magnificent shrine, furnished with ornate trappings, was erected over his bones and was surmounted with a white cupola, which gleams several miles away as one approaches the oasis. The shrine is of Egyptian craftmanship and seems incongruous in its desert surroundings and unfamiliar among a simple people.

There can be no gainsaying that al-Sayyid Muhammad bin Ali al-Sanusi was a great man and his life's work a great achievement. He is said to have been tall and of a distinguished appearance, an eloquent speaker, and a wise teacher.[1] His religious personality may be estimated by the fact that many Algerians, Tunisians, and Moroccans were so inspired by his teaching and example that they left their homes and followed him on his travels and at his orders went as missionaries into new lands, and by the fact that the Bedouin of Arabia and Libya, who are a reserved and unheeding people, accepted him as their guide in things both spiritual and temporal.

[1] Adams, op. cit., p. 10.

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savants, and later at Mecca. He is said to have been an eloquent and inspiring leader and he was evidently an able organizer. Unlike his father the Grand Sanusi and his nephew Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharif he has left no writings behind and he seems to have had less interest than they in literature and speculation. He lived an austere life and was considered by his followers to have been a saint and worker of miracles as great, or greater, than his father.

The Order expanded considerably under Sayyid al-Mahdi's leadership, particularly into the Sahara and the Sudan, and its greatly extended missionary enterprises demanded his personal attention. The conversion of the heathen and semi-heathen tribes of these regions created political problems and the trading activities of the Order required organization. The trade routes through the Libyan oases to the coast had increased in importance since the rise of the Sudanese Mahdi in 1881 had closed the Nile route. Personal direction was difficult from Jaghbub, so in 1895 Sayyid al-Mahdi moved the seat of the Order to Kufra, a more central position than Jaghbub in the theocratic empire being slowly built up. He first went to live at the zawiya of al-Ustad but shortly afterwards built a new zawiya, in which he resided, on a site which became known as al-Taj. He departed from Jaghbub amid the lamentations of his followers, only some of whom he was able to take with him to Kufra, leaving the rest behind at Jaghbub, with his nephew al-Sayyid Muhammad 'Abid as his titular representative there.

There are few places in the world so remote as Kufra oasis, but it was at the centre of the Sanusi empire and the meeting-place of a number of important desert routes. Before Sayyid al-Mahdi made it the seat of his Order, Kufra had been little more than a watering place for caravans and the centre for the wandering Tibbu tribes of the region, though the Zuwaya of al-Jikharra went there each year to collect dates. It now became an emporium through which caravans were constantly passing and exchange was carried on. The Sanusiya profited both by directly engaging in trade and transport and through customs dues.

The little village of mud and palmwood houses at al-Taj also became a centre of religious life and propaganda. The missionary efforts of the Order intensified all over Fazzan and into

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the territories of Kawar, Tibesti, Borku, Ennedi, Darfur, Wadai, Kanem, Chad, the Azger, the Air, and Baghirmi. Its teachings were spread as far as Senegal. The work of organizing this propaganda fell largely to Sayyid al-Mahdi's two principal lieutenants. Sidi Muhammad al-Barrani operated in Kanem, where he founded a lodge at Bir Alali on the route to Chad and organized bands among the Aulad Suliman, Zuwaya, Majabra, Tibbu, and especially the Tuwariq, to oppose the advance of the French into Central Africa; and afterwards in the Borku. Muhammad al-Sunni, and his son al-Mahdi, operated in Bornu and Baghirmi, where he entered into relations, politically unfruitful, with the Sultans of those countries, and in the Wadai, where he strengthened the good relations existing between the Sultan of that country and Sayyid al-Mahdi. In 1899 Sayyid al-Mahdi transferred the seat of his Order to Qiru (or Quru) oasis, between Borku and Tibesti, to direct better its propaganda, to administer the extensive regions won to it, and to organize resistance to the French.

It is sometimes said in European books that one reason why Sayyid al-Mahdi went from Jaghbub to Kufra was his desire to increase the distance between himself and the Turkish Administration of Cyrenaica, but I have not found any evidence to support this view. On the other hand there can be no doubt that he was alarmed by the military and political activities of the French, about which he seems to have been well informed. The French were hastening to reach the limits of the sphere allotted to them by the agreements with England of 1898 and 1899 about the partition of Central Africa. In January 1902 they seized Bir Alali (Kanem) and destroyed the Sanusiya zawiya there. At the end of May, or at the beginning of June, in the same year Sayyid al-Mahdi died. His brother, Sayyid Muhammad al-Sharif, had predeceased him at Jaghbub in 1896.

In general the energies of the Sayyid al-Mahdi had been directed to the Sahara and the Sudan and the main events during his headship of the Order took place off the Cyrenaican stage. I have not thought it necessary, therefore, to give more than a brief summary of his career and of the political history of the Order in Central Africa. He saw the Order his father had founded rise under his direction to the height of its expansion

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CHAPTER III

THE SANUSIYA AND THE TRIBES

I

793 619 WHEN the Grand Sanusi came to preach in Cyrenaica he found the kind of society I have outlined: a congeries of tribes without law or effective government, for the Turks had little control over the interior, but with like values and habits and a community of life which crossed tribal boundaries. The Bedouin to [181] whom he preached were simple people living the austere and monotonous life of the tents, with that savage character which has been so often portrayed, but also with those noble qualities which have seldom failed to evoke admiration from those who [177] have lived among them. They were profoundly ignorant about [797] the outside world and also—which is what touched the heart of the Grand Sanusi—about the faith of their fathers, and to this matter I must now return, since the Sanusiya was a missionary Order and can only be understood as such.

771 [797] Though the Bedouin professed Islam before the Grand Sanusi influenced them by his teaching, they were almost totally ignorant of its doctrinal content, rites, or ritual and moral duties, and it is safe to assume that they did not obey its precepts. It is safe to assume this because even to-day, after a century of Sanusiya instruction, the Bedouin perform their religious duties in a very perfunctory way, if at all, and when Muslim law is at variance with tribal custom they follow tribal custom. In saying that they are lax, I do not suggest that they [186] are not very sincere, Muslims. They are proud of being Muslims and consider themselves greatly superior to Christians, while they are contemptuous of Jews. Nevertheless, though they would not belittle, the Cyrenaican Bedouin feel no embarrassment at neglecting, the duties obligatory on every Muslim. The Confession of Faith is known to all and implicitly accepted by all. It imposes no irksome restrictions or tiresome duties. [782] But they almost completely neglect—I speak of the more nomadic sections whom I know best, but it is probably true of most Cyrenaican Bedouin—their daily prayers, a duty which is

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which often contrasts so strikingly with their poverty and rags and what Paolo Della Cella describes as their 'excessive and habitual filth'.[1]

It is important that it should be understood that the Bedouin of Cyrenaica were Muslim, at any rate by allegiance if not by instruction, before the Grand Sanusi propagated the faith among them, because otherwise it would be difficult to account for their ready acceptance of his guidance. He was not appealing to a pagan people to embrace Islam, but to a Muslim people to show in their lives the faith they professed. It was his achievement to have given their religion organized form and direction, and by so doing to have exercised a persistent and transformative influence on their morals; for if the Bedouin neglect religious duties to-day and are by peasant and urban standards ignorant, loud, and lawless, it can be imagined that they were troublesome indeed before the Grand Sanusi and Sayyid al-Mahdi had taught them something of the duties of their faith and had softened the harshness of their customs. That the Sanusiya made a big difference to their way of life cannot be doubted. Shaikh Muhammad 'Uthman tells us of the Bedouin of Cyrenaica that 'They are very good-natured and of a cheerful disposition. They have a profound reverence for the Shaikh Sidi al-Mahdi, and they fear God and His Prophet. One is in perfect security among them; a stranger, an explorer, has he even loads of gold or silver, has nothing to fear from them.' He also says, and for the same reason, that there were peace and security for caravans in the Wadai and in those parts of the Sahara where the Sanusiya was established; and he adds that Sayyid al-Mahdi had achieved these remarkable results by the exercise of spiritual authority only, and not by force, 'as an Amir or Sultan would have done'. As for the citizens of Banghazi, of whom the Tunisian traveller had a very poor opinion, he says that they were proud, inhospitable, and lazy, and would still have been plunged in ignorance and without a vestige of civilization or of religious education 'if the goodness of God had not sent them the Sanusiya fraternity, which contributed much to their moral regeneration'.[2] Even Italian authors have to admit that the Sanusiya did much for the people

[1] Op. cit., p. 109.
[2] Op. cit., pp. 52, 59, 62, and 116–17.

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of Cyrenaica.[1] The Bedouin remember with gratitude, as I have often heard them declare, the moral and cultural benefits brought to them by the Order. If they have fallen from the low religious and literary standards to which the Sanusiya raised a fraction of them it is due to the virtual extinction of its teaching office during their long struggle with the Italians.

II

The Bedouin the Grand Sanusi found in Cyrenaica were not only Muslims but also inveterate devotees of saints, the *Marabtin* (sing. *Marabat*) or Marabouts, as they are called in European accounts of North Africa, and the Grand Sanusi was in the long tradition of these holy men. Therefore, although I have touched on the matter in Chapter I, I need not excuse myself for treating it again in its Cyrenaican context, for Bedouin attachment to the Sanusiya springs from their personal devotion to the Grand Sanusi and his family, and not the other way round, and the Grand Sanusi derived his sanctity, and thereby his power, from the fact that he was a Marabout. The Bedouin are familiar with saints and ignorant of Orders. To them the Grand Sanusi was a saint and wonderworker, and a man with *baraka*, an ample measure of God's grace which flowed through him to ordinary folk; but there was nothing extraordinary about him. They knew his kind of old. When he died his tomb became a shrine, the largest and richest in Cyrenaica it is true, but only one among very many, dating from the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad, through the Martyrs who were killed fighting for the faith in Cyrenaica, to the pious and learned men of yesterday and the day before. His successors, by their kinship with him, and in virtue of their spiritual legacy from him, became heirs to his *baraka*; and so, to a lesser degree, have the heirs of the other religious teachers who came to Cyrenaica from the west, who died and were buried there, and whose descendants are the *Marabtin bil baraka* lineages of to-day. The authority the Grand Sanusi had over the Bedouin of Arabia and North Africa can be parallelled by the careers of many holy

[1] Giuseppe Macaluso, *Turchi, Senussi e Italiani in Libia*, 1930, p. 32; Giglio, op. cit., p. 22; and Arcangelo Ghisleri (quoting Andrea Pedretti), *Tripolitania e Cirenaica dal Mediterraneo al Sahara*, 1912, p. 132.